

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Uptown Broadway Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4703-4715 North Broadway not for publication

city, town Chicago vicinity of

state Illinois code 12 county Cook code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Richard Holtzman

street & number 42 East Superior Street

city, town Chicago vicinity of state Illinois 60611

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder of Deeds

street & number 120 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago state Illinois 60602

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Commission on Chicago Landmarks has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984-85 federal state county local

depository for survey records Commission on Chicago Landmarks, 321 N. LaSalle St., Chicago

city, town Chicago state Illinois

7. Description

Condition

___ excellent
xx ___ good
___ fair

___ deteriorated
___ ruins
___ unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
___ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Uptown Broadway Building is a three-story store and office building completely covering a triangular site near the northeast corner of Leland Avenue and Broadway. The dominant and important feature is the facade, on Broadway. The north and east elevations are common brick. The building has a flat roof, atop which there stands a small brick shed housing elevator equipment.

The front, which is approximately 40 feet high and 164 feet long, is entirely clad in terra cotta and glass, with metal door and shopfront trim. It is divided into seventeen bays. The main entrance is in the ninth or central bay. There is also an inconspicuous basement entrance in the 17th or northernmost bay.

The second and third floors, or office floors, are ordered by a line of two-story engaged terra-cotta pilasters. In the third and fourth bays from each end, a kind of pavilion interrupts this sequence, and the center post of each pavilion features an engaged terra-cotta column with spiral decoration.

Two colors are used in the terra cotta. The principal color is a pale ochre or brownish yellow; the secondary color is a slate gray. The gray is used for the fluted surface of the pilasters, for alternate turns of the columns, and around the entrance.

The third-floor windows are a modified Chicago window with a large main light, which pivots on center, and very narrow fixed side lights. The original second-floor windows were the same but they have been removed and the openings filled with glass block except for small central lights. The shops on the first floor have large plate-glass windows.

Pavilions rise above the principal roof line, where they culminate in a heavy entablature with cresting above and dentils below. Centered atop each pavilion is a wide, elaborate urn or tureen with fanciful handles. The two window bays are recessed more deeply than in the rest of the facade, and they terminate in round arches. Inside each arch is a round bas-relief medallion featuring an eagle. The keystone of the arch is a heavy scrolled console supporting a plumed helmet and other armorial devices. A richly framed oval cartouche dominates the spandrel between the arches, and heavy floral swags link these elements. The spiral columns have a simple base and an elaborate composite capital from which the arches spring. The spirals alternate between gray bands with applied ochre anthemias and ribbons, and ochre with incised flowers and strapwork.

The pilasters span the elevation from the second floor to the parapet. Each stands on a high base which features a large rectangular panel decorated with armorial motifs: plumed helmet, breastplate, shields, quivers. The capitals punctuate the coping, and each supports a small platform on which stands a heavy urn with relief decoration.

All spandrels between the second and third floor have identical treatment, with heads, festoons, ribbons, and balusters in bas relief. Between the pilasters above the third-story windows the spandrels have a drapery pattern. Between the bases of the pilasters and the columns are little balconettes with belted balusters flanked by heavy consoles. A ram's head faces to each side at the ends of the balustrades.

(see continuation sheet)

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(Description, continued)

The store fronts have been partially restored after years of inappropriate remodeling. The doors have decorative metal surrounds. Above the awnings (which are new) is a line of metal cresting, part of which is missing but most of which is in reasonably good condition. In the mezzanine space between this cresting and the balustrades, there is an intersecting arcade of trefoil arches, with rosettes in the spandrels; the arches spring from little colonnettes with spiral decoration and a kind of composite capital. The openings have lancet windows with diamond panes. This arcade runs the length of the building, interrupted only by the entrance. At each end there is a decorated pilaster and finally a panel featuring a grotesque head in bas relief with a heavy ring in its mouth.

The main entrance is related in certain respects to the pavilions. The door opening is round-arched; the soffit and architrave are decorated with rectangular panels containing bas-relief representations of helmets, urns, and various other motifs.

The heavy entablature of the entrance has convex moldings with dentils. Surmounting the keystone of the entrance arch is an angel's head, hooded and draped, holding an oval shield with a plumed helmet in its center. This head is flanked by two large twisted cornucopia heaped with fruit. At each side of the entrance, a flat area of gray terra cotta develops relief ornament in ochre, culminating at the top in a fanciful capital with an urn and ram's heads.

The original metal door surround is seen in the arch, but the doors themselves have been replaced.

The outer vestibule is finished in richly veined black marble or scagliola. On each side a round-topped mirror with a molded frame stands above a scrolled metal grille with a helmet in the center. The inner lobby, also in black marble or imitation marble, with a darker green base, has a high vaulted plaster ceiling. A large engaged column stands in the back between two round-arched openings, one for the stair and the other for the elevator. Display cases all around expand the space by reflection. None of the light fixtures appear to be original.

The largest store, at 4711 Broadway, has a mezzanine, reached by a curved stair. The balcony rail is decorative with scrolled inserts.

The north wall is common brick. A small building housing a funeral parlor stood next door at 4717 but was demolished around 1980. The east wall is also common brick. Up to the second story it is hidden and inaccessible as it abuts the walled fill of the elevated tracks. In the narrow southern part of the building there are no windows in this wall. A door opens onto the tracks, and at the north end there are some ordinary windows.

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(Description, continued)

Looking at the upper floors of the east wall, one sees what could be taken to be bricked-up lancet windows. However, closer inspection, and a knowledge of the interior plan, suggest that one is looking at the traces of some kind of applied ornament or signage. It is not known what this was or when it was applied or removed.

The condition of the terra cotta is good, with very little damage, even to the urns and the three-dimensional pieces. Two balusters are missing (out of 85). Some of the metal cresting is missing. Some lancet windows near the entrance are filled and vented; it is not known when this occurred. At the base of the shop windows an inappropriate covering of imitation brick has been applied. Several overhanging signs were added over the years, but they have all been taken down recently.

With the exception of the glass block in the second-floor windows, the building is in better condition than most Chicago commercial structures of the period.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1926 **Builder/Architect** W. W. Ahlschlager (1887-1965)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Uptown Broadway Building is an unusually rich and well preserved example of the use of terra cotta to create a striking facade for a commercial building. It represents in a dramatic manner the optimistic mood and the eclectic style of the prosperity of the nineteen-twenties.

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The building was begun in 1926 and completed in 1927, and thus came at the peak of the real-estate and building boom which swept Chicago and the nation at the time. This was a time of growth, wealth, and prosperity, and it was a time of stylistic eclecticism, experimentation, and fantasy. The building embodies all these characteristics to an extraordinary degree.

The exuberant and extravagant use of three-dimensional terra cotta to proclaim and distinguish a building may be regarded as a kind of theatricality. It is of course the movie theaters that carried this style to the limit, but in Chicago a number of store-and-office buildings show the same spirit and a comparable boldness. Most of them are at business intersections or along busy commercial streets. The Uptown Broadway Building is not at a major corner, but it lies halfway between Wilson-Broadway and Wilson-Lawrence, which at the time were two of the ten most valuable corners in the city outside the Loop.

Uptown in the twenties was a boom town, one of the two or three biggest outlying business centers in Chicago, a transportation hub, and an entertainment center, with hotels and apartment hotels reaching twelve stories, numerous restaurants, attractions such as the Aragon Ballroom, and a number of movie theaters. The Uptown Theatre stands just one block north of the Uptown Broadway Building and it epitomizes the extravagant use of terra cotta in fantastic style. When it opened in the summer of 1925 it was the world's largest movie theater, but later that year work was begun on an even larger movie theater, the Roxy, in New York City. The Roxy was designed by the same architect as the Uptown Broadway Building, Walter W. Ahlschlager of Chicago, whose work is important in Uptown, important in movie theaters, and important nationally for the scale of his operations as architect and developer.

When the elevated railroad came to Wilson Avenue at the turn of the century, Uptown began its career as a transportation nexus and a pleasure resort. Wilson Avenue Beach was a leading destination for summer outings. After World War I, the area became identified with a new lifestyle: hotel living, kitchenette apartments, single-person households, cafeterias, movies, and night clubs. The first tall building in the area, the 12-story Sheridan Plaza Hotel at Wilson and Sheridan, was built in 1920, when the neighborhood had few buildings over three stories and none over six. W. W. Ahlschlager was its architect and one of its owners. By its scale and its style, with elaborate terra-cotta ornament, it set the architectural tone for the coming boom. Across the

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(Significance, continued)

street on Sheridan Road, Ahlschlager had designed a major movie theater, the Pantheon (no longer extant), on land which he owned. With his partners in the Sheridan Plaza, he had founded the predecessor of the Uptown Chamber of Commerce.

Broadway became not only a traffic artery and a shopping district but also a rich lode of architectural terra cotta. From the "Eagles" building at 3837, where the street angles to the northwest, to the Uptown Theatre at 4816, where it turns back to due north, there is a remarkable series of commercial buildings of varying size, shape, color, and texture, taking advantage of this versatile material.

Terra cotta is masonry; like stone it is fireproof, durable, permanent in appearance and character. But it is modeled, not carved, and casting can reproduce the same form over and over. Pieces are hollow, not solid, and thus much lighter than stone, easier to mount, requiring less of a structural support system. Terra cotta thus became a material in which to build richly yet economically. Rich effects could be obtained by multiple casting, spreading the expense of design and modeling over a large number of pieces. On the building, the effect was like that of stone, but sculptural effects and colors were easier and less costly to obtain.

The Uptown Broadway Building has a facade clad entirely in terra cotta. Not one place is left uncovered and few places are left flat and unornamented. The windows have decorative mullions, and the shopfronts have decorative metal enclosures.

The ornament displays a profusion of motifs: heads and faces of people and animals, urns, armor, leaves and flowers, columns and pilasters, festoons, ribbons, and strapwork. Details derive from various architectural periods ranging from the classical to the late Baroque. The style may perhaps best be characterized as Chicago Spanish Baroque. The term Spanish Baroque was applied in Chicago in the twenties to a wide variety of buildings, most of them decorated with terra cotta.

Here the terra cotta work was done by the American Terra Cotta Company, one of the leading manufacturers in Chicago and in the U.S.A. The Depression ruined the terra cotta industry; only one manufacturer survived, in California. Today the construction of a building such as this would be unthinkable, not only because of taste or cost but because the industry has virtually ceased to exist.

Ahlschlager was a leading proponent of terra cotta and of this Spanish style. The earlier Sheridan Plaza had some of this character, as did most of his movie theaters, especially the Belmont, which opened in 1926, and is now sadly altered and deteriorated. The Belmont is perhaps the closest in style to the Uptown Broadway Building. Ahlschlager's architectural office was itself a Spanish fantasy; contemporary photos show a space looking like nothing more or less than the lobby of a movie theater, with what appears to be a 25-foot ceiling and a walk-in fireplace.

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(Significance, continued)

The exuberance of the facade of the Uptown Broadway Building is not wild and unrestrained. Several aspects of the design serve to moderate and control the energy of the details. The facade is perfectly symmetrical in design, deviations necessitated by the shop plans being carefully de-emphasized. The arrangement in the large is that of a colossal order, spanning the seventeen bays with a strict rhythm. Many of the ornamental details, varied as they are, are used in strict repetition across the front. This includes the arcade above the shops, the spandrels, and the parapet with its urns.

The three main areas of emphasis - the central entrance and the two pavilions - are arranged symmetrically. Several details relate these elements visually: recessed round-topped openings with bas-relief ornament on flat soffits and architraves, and heavy entablatures with similar features, particularly the heavy festoons and the large central oval cartouches. Recurrent motifs, particularly helmets, quivers, urns, and festoons, also contribute to the unity-in-variety of the facade.

The skillful use of color adds to the richness and to the unity of the design. The predominant pale ochre unifies the long and varied terra-cotta front. The use of slate gray for the fluted pilasters of the colossal order is very successful. The two colors, almost complementary, are muted, and the rhythmic disposition of the pilasters also serves to give a sense of order and control to the scheme. Where the pilasters are interrupted by the spiral columns of the pavilions, the slate gray is used for only part of the surface area of the columns, compensating for their greater depth and relief. The gray is also used to give greater emphasis at the entrance which is considerably smaller than the two pavilions. The little windows in the trefoil arcade have a bluish tint and this horizontal band thus gains a subtle emphasis helping to tie the pilastrade together at its base.

The use of terra cotta for bas relief is common, but some of the decorative features here are extraordinary for their three-dimensionality. This is true of the tops of the pavilions, with their almost free-standing plumed helmets, but the work over the entrance is even more remarkable. The hooded angel's head projects almost two feet from the wall, and beside it the two huge cornucopia stand like baskets of fruit almost detached from the surface behind.

The boldness of this sculptural work should be considered in connection with the unusually good condition of the terra cotta. Almost every piece is in place, and there is very little cracking or other damage, even in the projecting pieces. This testifies to the craftsmanship and skill of the manufacturer and the contractor. (The mason contractor was Fridstrom & Gustafson.)

Walter W. Ahlschlager came from a family of architects. By 1917 he was engaged both as architect and as developer in the first of a long series of hotel or

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(Significance, continued)

apartment towers and theaters on a large scale. The Pantheon dates from 1917, and he owned the land. After the war he built several large apartment hotels on the North Side from Lincoln Park to Rogers Park, as well as the Jackson Towers on Jackson Park and the Graemere on Garfield Park. He was a leading designer of movie theaters, including the Senate and the Belmont in Chicago, with over 3000 seats each, and the 6000-seat Roxy in New York. He built the famous Peabody Hotel in Memphis and the Netherlands Plaza complex in Cincinnati with its 45-story tower. His best-known Chicago building is probably the former Medinah Club tower at 505 North Michigan Avenue, companion to the Tribune Tower. In 1928 he was involved in planning a 75-story Apparel Mart north of Grant Park, and some leases were signed but the building was never begun. However, he was adroit enough to complete a 40-story tower in Dallas in 1943 despite wartime difficulties with labor and materials.

According to the Economist (August 7, 1926), the Uptown Broadway Building Corporation owned the building; its principal stockholders were Arnold Schlachter and Edward P. Lundstrom. They were officers of Sheridan Realty and of LaSalle Bond and Mortgage. In 1923 the office of Sheridan Realty was at 4715 Broadway, part of the future building site.

There is a neighborhood tradition that Al Capone, the notorious gangster, was the original owner of the building and operated a speakeasy in the basement. In the basement today there still stands a large safe with the name Capone in worn gilt letters. No other evidence is known for this tradition. Whatever the case may be, the building itself stands today as a monument to Uptown in the prosperous twenties, and to its architect and its craftsmen as they epitomize the terra-cotta style of the time.

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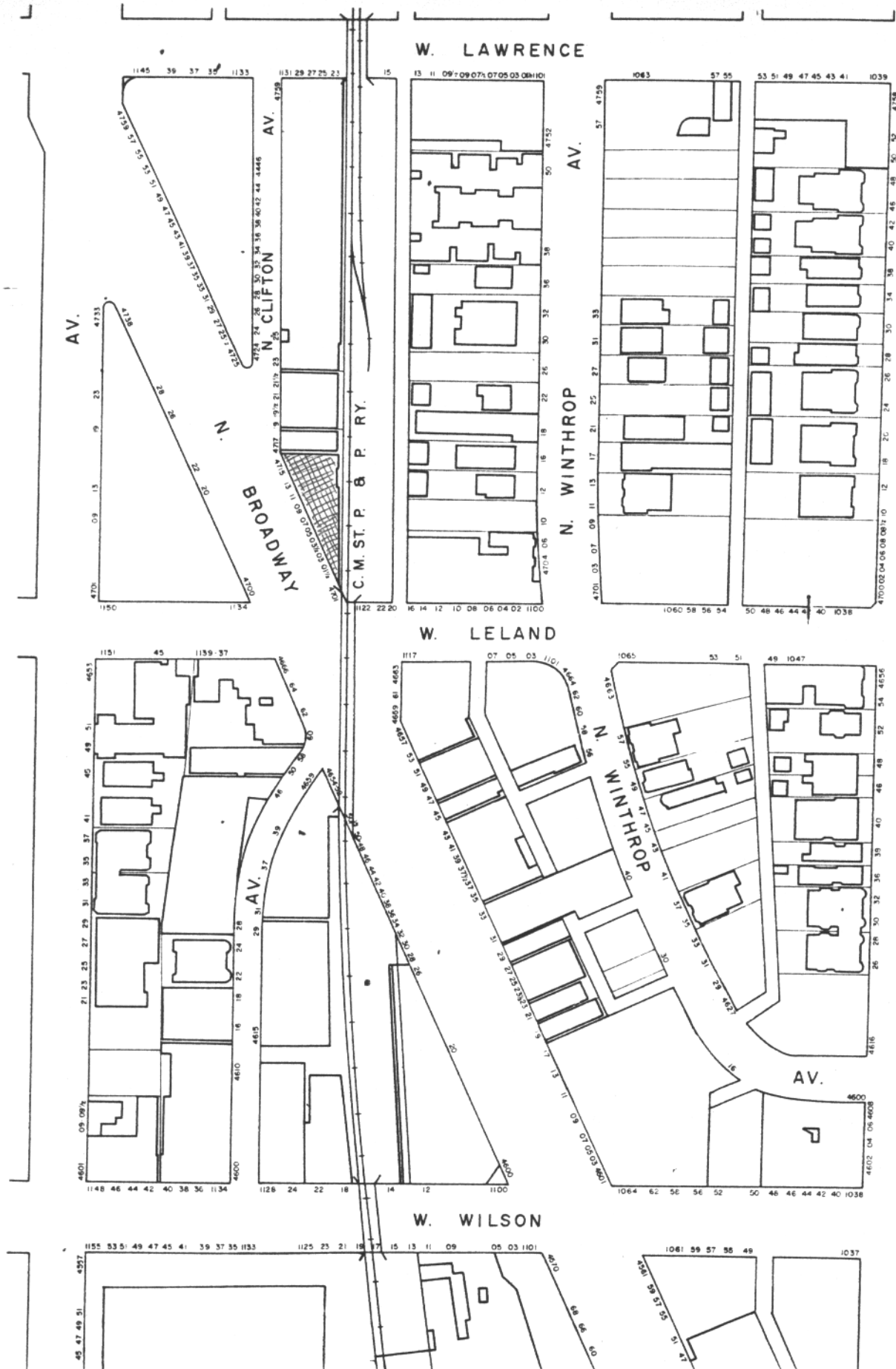
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Legal description:

Lots 18 and 19 in the resubdivision of vacated lots 206 through 227 both inclusive and vacated alley adjoining said lots, in William Deering Surrenden Subdivision in the west 1/2 of the north east 1/4 of Section 17, Township 40 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Cook County, Illinois.

Permanent real estate index number: 14-17-201-004

Uptown Broadway Building, 4707 North Broadway, Chicago, Illinois



From Sanborn building-outline maps, City of Chicago